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November 3, 2011

The Honorable Michael Bennet
702 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Bennet:

You recently released draft legislation to protect the Hermosa Creek area just north of Durango, and we wish to express our strong support for that component of the legislation. We have previously supported the work and recommendations of the Hermosa Creek Workgroup, and believe that this draft accurately reflects those recommendations.

The Board of Commissioners has followed the public process conducted by the Hermosa Creek Workgroup since its beginning over two years ago, and we believe that the process has been open, transparent, and effective. Virtually every group with an interest in the Hermosa watershed participated in the discussions, which were constructive and well-facilitated.

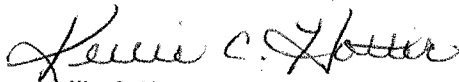
The Hermosa Creek watershed is an invaluable resource for La Plata County for a number of reasons. The recreational opportunities the area offers, from hunting and fishing to hiking, mountain biking, and skiing, are world class, and contribute significantly to the County's recreation and tourism economic base. Local outfitting businesses, hotels, restaurants, gas stations, and gear shops all benefit from a protected Hermosa Creek region.

With its Outstanding Waters designation by the State of Colorado, Hermosa Creek provides a major clean water contribution to the Animas River, which is the water source for many of La Plata County's residents. As a source of clean air and spectacular scenery, Hermosa Creek also plays a key role in maintaining the natural amenities that make La Plata County attractive to new residents and businesses.

The proposal to protect the Hermosa Creek watershed through a special management designation, containing wilderness and un-roaded designations for portions of the area, is truly a community-based approach to local land management. We commend you for respecting the hard work of the Hermosa Creek Workgroup by including the group's recommendations in your draft legislation. We support the legislation, and stand ready to help in whatever way to see it enacted into law.

Sincerely,

LA PLATA COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS



Kellie C. Hotter
Chair



Robert A. Lieb, Jr.
Vice-Chair



Wallace "Wally" White
Commissioner

Cc: Senator Mark Udall
Representative Scott Tipton